THE DISEASED BODY POLITIC, ATHENIAN PUBLIC FINANCE, AND THE MASSACRE AT MYKALESSOS (THUCYDIDES 7.27–29)

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IN THE MIDST OF HIS ACCOUNT of the Sicilian expedition Thucydides pauses to describe the economic and financial effects of the Spartan fortification of Dekeleia in Attica in 413 (7.27–28); one result of signal importance for the empire was Athens' decision to abolish tribute, and in its place to levy a harbor tax, the *eikostē*. Following this digression the historian relates an episode emblematic of the atrocity of war, the wholesale slaughter of the inhabitants of the defenseless Boiotian town of Mykalessos by 1,300 Thracian mercenaries. Most scholars would not adhere to Eduard Schwartz's view that the financial/economic digression has nothing to do with the representation of the Thracians' savagery;[1] nevertheless, the two sections have tended to be examined separately, the former by historians of the Athenian empire and finance[2] or by Thucydidean scholars looking at the passage historiographically but as distinct from 7.29,[3] and the latter by Thucydidean scholars exploring its function in the *History*.[4] There are, however, strong grounds for reading them together: in particular, a degree of detail in each not otherwise warranted by the narrative, a framing device, and the shared use of language common to the description of disease, all suggest that Thucydides was intentionally linking the two sections. By this linkage, I propose, Thucydides not only draws a connection between Athenian public finance and human suffering, but also develops themes central to the work as a whole, namely, those of moral responsibility, human nature,

[1] Schwartz 1919, 202. See Dover's comment in Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1970, 404.

[2] E.g., Böckh 1842, 325, 401–2; Cavaignac 1908, 147–48; Meiggs 1972, 369; Finley 1982, 55.

[3] E.g., Erbse 1953.

[4] E.g., Grene 1950, 70–79; de Romilly 1963, 308; Stahl 1966, 137–39; Pouncey 1980, 7, 94, 149; Quinn 1995; Crane 1996, 88, 90, 147. The exception is Connor (1984, 158), who details the ring composition linking the sections.

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the conflict between reason and passion, and the nexus of finances, leadership, and military power.

First, the detail in both the fiscal digression and the episode at Mykalessos immediately stands out, given their placement within the Sicilian account, the most self-contained and focused part of the *History*.[5] Much of the substance of 7.27–28 concerns a gradual process of fiscal and economic deterioration, yet Thucydides is prompted to embed a diachronic, thematic account in the context of an event utterly trivial to the expedition and the entire course of the war, namely, the tardy arrival of Thracian mercenaries in Athens and the decision to send them home. Moreover, shocking atrocity that the massacre at Mykalessos was, it was peripheral to the war, a minor event that could have been easily omitted, or relegated to a sentence. It is relevant to note in this connection the differing treatments of Skione and Melos. What happened in those places, in 422 and 416 respectively, was identical—a siege and subsequent massacre of the males and enslavement of the women and children—yet Thucydides relates the information about Skione as a passing mention in one sentence (5.32.1), whereas he devotes pages to Melos (5.84–116).

The prominence given to the fiscal digression and to what happened at Mykalessos, through such detailed narrative and especially the juxtaposition of the two sections, is in itself a sign that Thucydides intended a larger significance—through their interrelation—to be accorded to these events. The comparative example of Melos is again relevant, for its significance lies partly in its juxtaposition to the Sicilian books (which would explain why Thucydides chose to highlight it, rather than the identical case of Skione's treatment), as is similarly the case with the juxtaposition of the Funeral Oration and the plague (and Perikles' last speech).

Thucydides constructs a second link between the two sections by using the subject of the Thracian mercenaries as a framing device for his digression on the economic effects of Dekeleia: in 27.1–2, the Thracians arrive in Athens too late for the expedition for which they had been intended, that of reinforcing the army in Sicily. The Athenians, Thucydides continues, decided to send them home, because "to keep them for the Dekeleian War seemed very costly; for each received a drachma a day" (οἱ δ' Ἀθηναῖοι, ὡς ὕστεροι ἦκον, διενοοῦντο αὐτοὺς

[5] As is also true in the case of the Peisistratid digression (6.54–59).

πάλιν ὅθεν ἦλθον ἐς Θράκην ἀποπέμπειν. τὸ γὰρ ἔχειν πρὸς τὸν ἐκ τῆς Δεκελείας πόλεμον αὐτοὺς πολυτελὲς ἐφαίνετο· δραχμὴν γὰρ τῆς ἡμέρας ἕκαστος ἐλάμβανεν).[6] Yet rather than immediately return to Sicilian events, or continue with the Thracian narrative, he instead undertakes a lengthy analysis of what was a gradual process of fiscal deterioration that could have gone almost anywhere in book 7 following the mention of the fortification of Dekeleia in 7.19; its placement here, however, is necessary in order to explain why the Thracians were sent home. Following the fiscal digression Thucydides emphasizes the connection with a resumptive sentence in 29.1, completing the frame, that recalls that fiscal distress prompted their dismissal: "they sent home the Thracians . . . not wanting to run up expense because of their present lack of money" (τοὺς οὖν Θράκας τοὺς τῷ Δημοσθένει ὑστερήσαντας διὰ τὴν παροῦσαν ἀπορίαν τῶν χρημάτων οὐ βουλόμενοι δαπανᾶν εὐθὺς ἀπέπεμπον, κτλ.). Thucydides thus immediately forges a clear and intentional link between the two sections at the narrative level.

The most illuminating link between these chapters, however, is linguistic and semantic, specifically the use of vocabulary associated with descriptions of disease. There has been a resurgence of interest in Thucydides' use of medical language in recent years, as scholars have argued, for example, for a more structural and pervasive debt to the medical writers than has been recognized, or have explored the way in which the historian's use of medical metaphors illuminates his interest in human psychology; Simon Hornblower and Simon Swain have in fact noted individual instances of medical language in one or another of the chapters under scrutiny here.[7] I suggest here that its frequency and concentration have not yet been equally appreciated, nor the implications of its usage.

It must be acknowledged at the outset that much vocabulary found in the medical corpora is of course also used by other writers in nonmedical contexts, without necessarily any exclusively medical connotation. Thucydides, like so many of his intellectual and artistic contemporaries in the fifth century, freely shared and exploited language

[6]Throughout the essay I have relied on the OCT Greek text. Translations are my own.

[7]E.g., Jouanna 1980; Hornblower 1987, 131–35; Rechenauer 1991; Swain 1994. Interest in Thucydides' description of the plague has remained fairly steady since Page (1953) and Parry (1969). For instances in the chapters under discussion here, see Hornblower 1991, 494; Swain 1994, 306.

common to other genres and modes of inquiry, whether medical, sophistic, or philosophical.[8] This was language in circulation, "in the air," not necessarily tied to any particular origin, as writers engaged in a "shared response" to the problems of the community and man's relation to it.[9] However, there is such a striking quantity of language in the chapters at issue here that is also found not only in the medical treatises but likewise in Thucydides' description of the plague, that we need to be open to the possibility that the historian intends a specifically medical resonance. But let us first explore how such language informs the financial digression and then see how it links those chapters to the account of the massacre at Mykalessos.

In 7.27 Thucydides begins to describe the effects of Dekeleia on the Athenians. He notes the harm done to them by the presence of the Spartan garrison and comments that "the destruction of wealth and loss of men particularly damaged their state" (καὶ ἐν τοῖς πρῶτον χρημάτων τ' ὀλέθρῳ καὶ ἀνθρώπων φθορᾷ ἐκάκωσε τὰ πράγματα, 7.27.3). Hornblower notes that in this section Thucydides uses language "curiously appropriate to the effects of plague" and cites the intriguing similarity to 3.87.2 (especially in the use of ἐκάκωσε), which relates the recurrence of the disease in 428: παρέμεινε δὲ τὸ μὲν ὕστερον οὐκ ἔλασσον ἐνιαυτοῦ, τὸ δὲ πρότερον δύο ἔτη, ὥστε Ἀθηναίους γε μὴ εἶναι ὅτι μᾶλλον τούτου ἐπίεσε καὶ ἐκάκωσε τὴν δύναμιν ("the second occurrence lasted no less than a year, and nothing afflicted the Athenians and harmed their power more").[10]

Vocabulary characteristic of the description of disease continues in 7.28. After specifying the economic hardship and damage the fort caused, Thucydides notes, "but what was especially afflicting them (ἐπίεζεν) was that they were fighting two wars simultaneously, and they were affected by such a desire for victory (φιλονικία) as no one hearing about it would have believed, before it actually happened" (28.3). The verb πιέζω, used abundantly by the medical writers,[11] and by Thucydides four times in his description of the plague (2.52, 2.54, 2.58.2,

[8] An excellent discussion of this phenomenon appears in Lloyd 1979, passim.

[9] Goldhill 1986, 229, with reference specifically to tragedy and the sophists.

[10] Hornblower 1991, 494. He cites the use of ὄλεθρος and φθορά as well.

[11] Maloney and Frohn 1984, s.v. πιέζω, list 144 instances; a *TLG* search pulls up 161 uses (including compounds).

3.87.2),[12] again recalls 3.87.2: "Nothing afflicted (ἐπίεσε) the Athenians more than having the second occurrence of the plague on top of the first"; the allusions to two events causing special damage make the parallel exceptionally close.[13] Moreover, καθέστησαν, "they came into," may also have a medical resonance, especially in conjunction with the word φιλονικία, to which I shall return.

The final section of chapter 28 contains a cluster of words that are characteristic of descriptions of disease, used here metaphorically, as we shall see, in a highly original context. The first is the use of προσπίπτω. Thucydides has been elaborating on the Athenians' φιλονικία in an extraordinary piece of syntax, in which clause after clause tumbles forth as he describes the Athenians' taking on more and more: "For could anyone have imagined that even when besieged by the Peloponnesians entrenched in Attica, they would still, instead of withdrawing from Sicily, stay on there besieging in like manner Syracuse, a town in no way inferior to Athens, and create so great a paradox for the Greeks of their power and daring, as to give the spectacle of a people which, at the beginning of the war, some thought might hold out one year, some two, none more than three, if the Peloponnesians invaded their country, now seventeen years after the first invasion, after having already suffered from all the evils of war, going to Sicily and undertaking a new war nothing inferior to that which they had already had with the Peloponnesians?" He then comments, "Because of these things, since great harm was resulting from Dekeleia, and the rest of the expenses befalling them were great (τῶν ἄλλων ἀναλωμάτων μεγάλων προσπιπτόντων), they became weakened in money." LSJ, citing this passage (II.2), translate προσπιπτόντων as expenses "to be incurred." But in view of its appearance in an extended section (7.27–28) describing a kind of pathological condition affecting the Athenians, I suggest we should take προσπιπτόντων not as a neutral metaphor, as "incurring" expenses con-

[12]Thucydides uses πιέζω only 15 other times in a nonmedical context: that is, it is not that common a verb for him.

[13]There are a number of examples in the medical texts in which the presence of a second disease on top of a first makes the condition incurable (e.g., *Aphorisms* 4.46, 5.14, 6.35, 6.43), though there are also plenty of examples in which the second disease cures the first. The view expressed in *Places of Man* 38, that old diseases are harder to cure than new ones, is particularly interesting in the Thucydidean context being discussed.

notes, but rather as one linked closely with illness: that is, the expenses are "attacking," or "striking" the Athenians. It is important to recognize that Thucydides' use of this verb in a financial context is unusual; it begins to appear regularly in such a way only in the third century B.C.

What results from the "attacking expenses" is that the Athenians become ἀδύνατοι τοῖς χρήμασι. Thucydides earlier in his *History* sets up an argument that naval power, δύναμις, depends on wealth, more specifically, on the expenditure of reserves of money, περιουσία χρημάτων, and therefore in one sense in 7.28.4 he is referring to the Athenians' becoming "unpowerful." I think we can go beyond Dover and others, however, who, interested in the phrase solely for the history of war finance, have interpreted this simply to mean that the Athenians are bankrupt (though this is untrue),[14] to appreciate how the historian may be, through another unusual expression, continuing the description of a pathological condition by using ἀδύνατος in a medical sense: expenses attack the Athenians like disease, with the result that they become ἀδύνατοι—"weakened" or "disabled," as used in, for example, *Regimen in Acute Diseases* 2.482.1, or Lysias 24, Περὶ τοῦ ἀδυνάτου, "On the Invalid."[15]

Thucydides then relates the Athenians' decision to abolish tribute and impose a harbor tax, "thinking that they would increase their revenue by that means." He continues, "for their expenses were much greater than before, since the war had also grown; whereas their revenues were perishing" (αἱ δὲ πρόσοδοι ἀπώλλυντο, 7.28.4). Thucydides' choice of the verb ἀπόλλυμι, a favorite of the medical writers to describe the progress of disease,[16] is, especially given its proximity to the other words in 28.4 just examined, highly suggestive of the wasting away of a body from disease; here Thucydides is applying it to money in a way similar to the expression ἀδύνατοι τοῖς χρήμασι.[17]

[14] Among other indications they have not yet touched the "Iron Reserve" set aside at the beginning of the war (Thuc. 2.24), and will not do so until the revolt of Chios in 412 (8.15.1).

[15] Rechenauer (1991, 207 n. 19) would include a further resonance, the (false) prognosis about the expected length of the Peloponnesian War in 7.28.3. On *dunamis* in the medical corpus see Plamböck 1964.

[16] Maloney and Frohn (1984) cite 160 uses in the corpora.

[17] Cf. Antiphon Soph. 54, ἀπολόμενον τὸ ἀργύριον; there the meaning is "lost" in a literal sense.

To return to my starting caveat: while none of the vocabulary examined here is by any means exclusively medical in connotation, its frequency and especially its *clustering* imply strongly that Thucydides is aiming at a specifically medical resonance; if so, then to what end? It is significant that the context of such language is fiscal and economic, and this marks Thucydides' originality: he is the first to apply this kind of language to the realm of money and finances. The remarkable and unprecedented phrase χρημάτων ὀλέθρῳ is especially notable. The word ὄλεθρος, with its epic and tragic as well as medical resonances,[18] is normally applied to human, not inanimate, destruction.[19] Likewise the equally remarkable ἀδύνατοι τοῖς χρήμασι links money and the body in a way that is both metaphorical and nonmetaphorical, for money acts as a kind of disease weakening the Athenians and causes actual human destruction.[20] Indeed the concentration of this language associated with disease creates a kind of "medical field" within which Thucydides can represent the polis as a body—in this case, the body politic[21]—whose strength was supplied and measured by χρήματα. Thus the wealth itself becomes something organic.

This kind of construction shares much with a larger Greek pattern of thinking that conceptualizes χρήματα as something in close connection with, at times as a kind of extension of, the body, illustrated, for example, in the popular linkage χρήματα καὶ σώμα, or the trichotomy χρήματα καὶ σώμα καὶ ψυχή. A multitude of formulations, beginning

[18]There are 161 occurrences in the medical corpora (84 in Homer).

[19]Connor 1984, 158. Only Aeschylus uses it in connection with a thing (οἴκων ὄλεθρον, *Choeph.* 862), and there it is clearly metonymic; though as I argue below, in one sense Thucydides is constructing χρήματα as organic, not inanimate.

[20]Cf. 1.25.4, where a similar phrase, δυνάμει χρημάτων, is applied to the Corcyreans, but with the abstract noun δύναμις in the dative dependent on the participle ὄντες rather than a personal adjective as in 7.28.

[21]Of course Greeks equated the polis with its citizens, but the explicit expression σῶμα πολιτείας does not come into use until the fourth century (Din. 1.110, on which see Renehan 1982 s.v. σῶμα; Arist. *Pol.* 1302b34–42). It is tempting, however, to see in the use of the *erastēs* metaphor applied to the city (Thuc. 2.43.1)—if it does indeed apply to the city rather than the city's *dynamis* (cf. Ar. *Ach.* 143, *Equit.* 732, 1340–44)—as well as in the word *philopolis,* "lover of one's city" (e.g., Ar. *Lys.* 546) a connection to the idea of the city as a body, as it is implicit in 7.28 through the link with disease. Cf. also the personification of Demos in Aristophanes' *Knights* and the cult of personified Demokratia, though it is uncertain when precisely it was founded. For the citizen body represented artistically in this period see most recently Stewart 1997, 133–51.

with Hesiod and continuing throughout the classical period, place wealth and the body in close association:[22] for example, *Works and Days* 686, χρήματα γὰρ ψυχὴ πέλεται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι, "wealth means life to wretched mortals"; or the proverbial χρήματ' ἀνήρ, as in Alkaios fr. 360 and Pindar *Isthmian* 2.11–12.[23] In a powerful chorus from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* Ares exchanges ashes likened to gold dust for men: ὁ χρυσαμοιβὸς δ' Ἄρης σωμάτων / καὶ ταλαντοῦχος ἐν μάχῃ δορὸς / πυρωθὲν ἐξ Ἰλίου / φίλοισι πέμπει βαρὺ ψῆγμα, κτλ. (437–42).[24] The idea that money or wealth generally makes one εὐγενής (so, e.g., Eur. *El.* 37–38) is of course often ironic and contested; but it too represents money in intimate connection with the body.

Particularly suggestive is a passage in the anonymous writer quoted by Iamblichos in the *Protreptikos,* thought to date to the Peloponnesian War years: he uses the trichotomy χρήματα καὶ σώμα καὶ ψυχή in referring to misfortunes, συμφοραί, which are laid on τὰ σώματα, αἱ ψυχαὶ, and τὰ χρήματα.[25] Here we are very close to a notion that χρήματα is in a sense an extension of the body and soul, a part of one's being. One would not be tempted to call this writer a major mind, nor is he an original thinker, as Kathleen Freeman has noted,[26] but that very fact makes it likely that his ideas, including the expression quoted, are derivative, and "in the air." Finally, in the fourth century, Plato among others is particularly fond of the collocation χρήματα καὶ σώμα καὶ ψυχή (e.g., *Republic* 366c2; cf. 442a6–8); while the Middle Comedy poet Timokles has an especially apt formulation: fr. 35,1, τ' ἀργύριον ἐστι αἷμα καὶ ψυχὴ βροτοῖς, "money is blood and life to mortals."

These passages obviously have different contexts and aims—some are contesting a claim, for example, that χρήματα is the man, or blood, or are concerned with moral implications, others more with the eco-

[22]This topic, which I plan to explore more fully elsewhere, deserves a fuller treatment than is possible here.

[23]See McLennan 1977, 133–34. Cf. also Kurke's analysis (1991, 240–56) of *Isthm.* 2.11–12, in which she draws attention to the importance of the use to which money is put, and its positive or negative value.

[24]I thank Charles Segal for bringing this passage to my attention.

[25]Τί δ' ἐστὶ ταῦτα αἱ νόσοι, τὸ γῆρας, αἱ ἐξαπίναιοι ζημίαι, οὐ τὰς ἐκ τῶν νόμων λέγω ζημίας (ταύτας μὲν γὰρ καὶ εὐλαβηθῆναι ἔστι καὶ φυλάξασθαι), ἀλλὰ τὰς τοιαύτας, πυρκαιάς, θανάτους οἰκετῶν, τετραπόδων, ἄλλας αὖ συμφοράς, αἱ περίκεινται αἱ μὲν τοῖς σώμασιν, αἱ δὲ ταῖς ψυχαῖς, αἱ δὲ τοῖς χρήμασι, 99, 5.

[26]Freeman 1959, 414.

nomics—but for my purposes the linkage itself is what is important. For it makes clear that the representation of money as organic, and part of one's "biological" makeup, or an essential quality of a person like beauty, or wisdom, would therefore not have been jarring to contemporaries, as it seems to us—and after all one's estate was represented as one's οὐσία, and interest as τόκος. Thucydides reconfigures such constructions, however, to place them on the level not of individual or even of family but of the collective (as he does more generally in his *History*):[27] χρήματα—which for Thucydides in the contexts at issue here (for expenditure on power) is always money[28]—is part of who the Athenians collectively are.

Thus the use of medical language allows Thucydides to present money as organic as well as a pathology, and the Athenians as diseased. This has some intriguing implications. Above all, the medical "template" offers a useful means of highlighting the complexity of human agency and moral accountability. Swain has argued that Thucydides departs from the medical writers in his focus on psychological effects of disease;[29] in chapter 28 (and 29; see below) the medical template used metaphorically provides an excellent illustration of this concern. While in the earlier parts of his *History* Thucydides remarkably detaches wealth from morality,[30] in the framework of the Sicilian narrative we seem to be back in familiar territory, in that Thucydides reverts to more traditional representations by casting the launching of the Sicilian expedition in Solonian or Theognidean terms: as in the case of Solon's Athenians, the Athenians in 415, encouraged by Alkibiades and with him swayed by the lure of money, wish to ruin the city.[31] Considered in these

[27] On this see most recently Crane 1996, esp. chs. 3–5.

[28] Kallet–Marx 1993, passim. This is not to say that Thucydides cannot use the word in a nonmonetary sense, as von Reden notes (1995, 174); only that in the realm of expenditure for power, it is used with reference to money.

[29] Swain 1994. He examines this specifically with reference to Thucydides' emphasis on human nature.

[30] See Kallet–Marx 1993, 16, where, however, I erroneously imply that morality and wealth are divorced throughout the work.

[31] Thuc. 6.19 with 6.24; αὐτοὶ δὲ φθείρειν μεγάλην πόλιν ἀφραδίησιν / ἀστοὶ βούλονται χρήμασι πειθόμενοι (Solon fr. 4.5–6 West). Thucydides' treatment, however, is in fact appreciably more complex, involving an intricate web of cause and effect. First, fear of Alkibiades' excesses turn *hoi polloi* against him; yet his excesses, as they are linked into the expedition, also arouse their greed and make them eager for the expedition—greed which his speech in 6.16ff. plays upon (and Nikias', unintentionally).

simple terms, the Athenians are morally responsible for what happens; they are the agents of their destruction.

Yet at the same time Thucydides gives a twist to this time-honored if somewhat hackneyed construction by the way that he deploys the metaphor of disease. The medical field embedded in 7.27–28 fosters the conclusion that what the Athenians were doing, or what was happening to them, was in some sense beyond or out of their entire control, that they were objects being affected, not the collective agent. If we return to the passage in which he describes the expenses "attacking" the Athenians (28.4), representing money as disease is useful rhetorically, as it allows Thucydides to set up an interesting inversion in order to chart a shift (as he wants to see it) in Athenian power. Earlier in the *History* he makes explicit that power depends on the expenditure of money. As he states in 1.99, the Athenian navy grew strong at the expense of the allies. The Spartan king Archidamos puts it most succinctly: success in war is a matter of expense (δαπάνη, 1.83.2). Earlier in the *History* the Athenians are the actors: *they* spend, and power results. Now they are objects or victims: it is the expenses that attack them, and as a result they become weakened, ill, in money. Thus, whereas expense had been used as an index of vital strength, it is now a disease draining it.

In support of this interpretation is the reference at the beginning of 28.3 to the Athenians' φιλονικία. As Kenneth Dover explains, φιλονικία "is not something which one chooses, but something of which one becomes a victim, like love, fear, and grief."[32] This relates most obviously to Thucydides' account of the decision to go to Sicily in 6.24.3, in which ἔρως attacks or infects the Athenians—the verb used is ἐμπίπτω: καὶ ἔρως ἐνέπεσε τοῖς πᾶσιν ὁμοίως ἐκπλεῦσαι—so that the expedition itself becomes something out of their full control. The Athenians become not agents but victims as they plan to invade Sicily;[33] so ἔρως, often personified, is typically represented as a disease violently attacking his victims.[34] Similarly, language of the passions is applied in 7.28 to the Athenian "body politic":[35] φιλονικία strikes the Athenians, which makes them behave as they do.

[32]Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1970 ad loc.

[33]De Romilly (1963, 326–27) notes the contrast between reason and passion in this section of the work in her discussion of the pathology of empire.

[34]E.g., Eur. *Hipp.* 38. See Winkler 1990, 82–93. See also Faraone 1999.

[35]As he has with money, so Thucydides is also playing with inversions in the case of the passions: whereas earlier in the work the Athenians are empowered by the passions

In this state of affliction the Athenians inevitably act excessively, as Thucydides' syntax mimics in 28.4 as he describes the two wars. This excessiveness was "incredible" to other Greeks, and here too lies another possible link with the plague. Recall a well–known passage from book 1, chapter 23. Thucydides is winding up the argument, twenty–three chapters long, that nothing on the scale of the Peloponnesian War ever previously occurred in Greek history, measured in length and extent of suffering and catastrophe. "Stories of things that had happened, handed down by tradition, that had not been directly experienced by those listening to them, suddenly ceased to be incredible" (τά τε πρότερον ἀκοῇ μὲν λεγόμενα, ἔργῳ δὲ σπανιώτερον βεβαιούμενα οὐκ ἄπιστα κατέστη); he then mentions earthquakes, eclipses, drought and famine, and lastly and famously the plague (23.3).[36] If we compare this to 7.28.3, καὶ ἐς φιλονικίαν καθέστασαν τοιαύτην ἣν πρὶν γενέσθαι ἠπίστησεν ἄν τις ἀκούσας, the similarity in thought and expression points toward some intriguing implications. For it fits the Athenians' behavior in 415–413 into the category of the incredible, but also may suggest that, as in the case of the phenomena and calamities of 1.23.3, there is a sense in which it is something that transcends that over which humans have control.

I have suggested thus far that Thucydides' linkage of money and disease allows him to present the Athenians' behavior in a complex light, one that makes them responsible for their actions to some extent, yet not in another. There is more to say on this point, but before we continue, it is necessary to bring into the discussion what precisely the Athenians do when they are "afflicted." Thucydides has illustrated the Athenians' impassioned behavior by noting their "incredible" decision not to withdraw from Sicily after the Spartans fortified Dekeleia, but rather to remain and thus fight two wars, with the result that they became ἀδύνατοι τοῖς χρήμασι. Then he comments in 28.4: "It was around this time that they instituted a five percent tax on sea traffic in place of levying tribute from their subjects, thinking that in this way

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(e.g., 2.13.2–6, 2.43.1) which are applied to constructive use, now love and lust for victory attack them. Thucydides' presentation has much in common with Giambattista Vico's formulation in *Scienza Nuova* (pars. 132–33; cf. 130 and 135) of passions which can lead men astray or which can be harnessed for the strength and prosperity of the state, as well as with seventeenth–century debates on the relationship between the passions and economic interest. See Hirschman 1977, esp. 31–56.

[36]On this and other reports of disbelief in Thucydides, comparing them to Herodotos and Xenophon, see Packman 1991.

they would get more revenue. For, on the one hand, their expenditures were not the same as they had been before, but had increased to a far greater extent, inasmuch as the war was also larger. While on the other hand, their revenues were perishing" (αἱ μὲν γὰρ δαπάναι οὐχ ὁμοίως καὶ πρίν, ἀλλὰ πολλῶ μείζους καθέστασαν, ὅσῳ καὶ μείζων ὁ πόλεμος ἦν· αἱ δὲ πρόσοδοι ἀπώλλυντο, 28.4).

This remarkable passage is of obvious importance in the history of Athenian war finance in particular and the empire in general. Considering its significance—it eliminates in one stroke the innovation that crucially and indispensably enabled the first experiment in empire in the Greek world—it is frustrating that scholars have ultimately been unable to do very much with it. Certainly it makes clear that tribute had become inadequate to fuel the needs of an imperial power in continuous war.[37] And it implies that, contrary to the impression we get of Athens' virtually absolute control of the Aegean, the "Athenian lake," there were substantial profits to be had from maritime trade of which the Athenians saw little, despite their naval *archē*. Unfortunately, however, we simply do not have the means to judge the effectiveness of the measure; as Andrewes has observed, "there is no direct evidence of the working of the new system."[38] Most scholars, however, believe that tribute was reinstated in the summer of 410; indeed it is often treated as a fact. But the evidence is circumstantial and problematic, and there are other indications that the *eikostē* remained in place, though also problematic.[39] In one respect Thucydides is no help here, because his *History* breaks off before the suggested date of reimposition; but it is not clear that he would have mentioned it anyway.

I have illustrated above that Thucydides is presenting the Athenians as behaving excessively and irrationally; yet one might object that, although we have no information on the success of the new revenue system and cannot therefore properly assess the wisdom of dispensing with the old one, the decision to institute the *eikostē* was rational and based

[37]There are, however, several questions that rise from the context of Thucydides' insertion of the *eikostē,* including whether there is an implication, given his linkage of the tax with the decision to continue fighting "two wars," that had the Athenians only been fighting one war, tribute would have been adequate.

[38]Andrewes 1992, 458. There is a possible allusion to the *eikostē* in Antiphon's *Herodes* (ch. 77) where the speaker, Euxitheos, refers to the τέλη duly paid by his father, a Mytilenaian; see Wade-Gery (p. 214 of the Loeb translation).

[39]See the useful summary in Meiggs 1972, 438–39, with relevant bibliography.

on extensive investigation into and discussion of calculations and estimates of maritime taxation. One might also argue, taking an optimistic view of Athenian democracy, that the very fact that the tax was instituted demonstrates that the majority of Athenians judged it a likely and worthwhile means of generating increased revenue for the war. But did Thucydides (now in exile) share the majority view? First, what has not really been asked, but is a question central to understanding both Thucydides' view of the *eikostē* and indeed the reason for its appearance in the *History,* is why are we learning about this piece of information here? The function of the digression as a whole is not primarily to supply needed financial information with which to understand the financing of the war, nor is the specific reference to the *eikostē* there to fill out a description of the administrative mechanisms for generating imperial revenue. Thucydides mentions the fiscal decision in the midst of a description of the Athenians' psychological condition; that is, the historian refers to this decision above all to illuminate a collective state of mind: the Athenians have *already* overextended themselves by deciding to stay in Sicily after the fortification of Dekeleia, and they now, under the influence of an unreasonable submission to a passion, afflicted by a disease of money, decide upon a measure that will allow them, so they hope, to overextend themselves even farther.

Embedding the decision to abolish tribute and to impose the *eikostē* within a framework of (negatively) impassioned, diseased behavior, then, encourages the reader to see it as the result *not* of sound and sober fiscal planning—and painstaking analysis of and investigation into maritime commerce as it must have been,[40] and which another author might have presented as prudent and rational—but rather of Athenians' making an emergency decision in a climate of irrationality, beset by the uncontrollable consequences of their own human nature and passions, no longer as true agents, or, to put it another way, without an expert advisor at the helm. Indeed I suggest that Thucydides is strongly implying that the decision was *not* working in the Athenians' economic or political/military self–interest because the goal of the *eikostē* was to facilitate overextension and excessive behavior that could only lead to downfall, not to increased power. Thucydides, then, is encouraging his readers to assess the decision to abolish tribute and to impose the *eikostē* as misguided because of the use to which the increased revenue is

[40] I examine the *eikostē* more fully in a forthcoming study.

to be put. Whether this provides a key to assessing its fiscal impact is unfortunately difficult to say.

However, the medical field or perhaps template may be usefully invoked to help understand qualities of the decision a little better. In one respect, as we have seen, in his unique variant of the money/body connection, Thucydides represents money as natural, inasmuch as it is part of the body politic; but as disease it is both natural and unnatural: disease has its own nature, as is expressed, for example, in *On the Sacred Disease* and *Airs, Waters, Places*; but it is also, as Lloyd points out, "contrary or hostile to the nature of the organism" (Lloyd 1987, 13). The Athenians' financial sickness is fundamentally contrary to the healthy nature of the body politic.

This ambiguity has an intriguing relation to Aristotle's discussions in book 1 of his *Politics* and book 5 of *Nichomachean Ethics* of the ambiguous nature of money.[41] For Aristotle, money is both natural and unnatural; it is notoriously hard to pin him down to consistency,[42] but a crucial factor for him is the *use* to which money as a medium of exchange is put: if to facilitate procuring necessary goods, it is natural and acceptable; but profit–oriented exchange, in which money is an end in itself and is unlimited, is unnatural, παρὰ φύσιν. It may be no accident that Thucydides is presenting Athens' fiscal planning in a part of the narrative in which money occupies an ambiguous position through the link with disease. In Thucydidean terms there is a moral problem in the Athenians' quest for more money in 413, not only because the majority, he tells us, have in mind the goal of obtaining still greater wealth (6.24.4), but also because their quest for more money will exact an enormous human toll, for Athenians and innocent Greeks alike.

This last point brings us to Mykalessos. Grave consequences on a more explicitly human level attend on the Athenians' psychological state depicted in 7.28. Thucydides follows the financial digression with the famous and wrenching description of the Thracian massacre of the people of Mykalessos. As the narrative continues in 29.2, the Athenian general Dieitrephes and the Thracians set out from Athens and arrive at Mykalessos, a little town in Boiotia, scarcely fortified and in disrepair as the Mykalessians did not expect an attack. As Thucydides describes the scene, "The Thracians fell on Mykalessos and pillaged the houses

[41] E.g., *Pol.* 1257b10–17; *NE* 1133a30–b15.
[42] Meikle 1995, 87–104.

and temples and slaughtered the inhabitants, sparing neither old nor young, but killing everyone they saw, children and women and in addition cattle and everything else they could spot with breath in it; for the Thracian race, when it is filled with overbold confidence (θαρσήσῃ), is among the most murderous of the barbarian peoples. And then there was in general great confusion and every form of destruction occurred (ἰδέα πᾶσα ὀλέθρου): falling on a children's school, the largest in the area and of which the children had just gone inside, they butchered them all. Indeed the misfortune that befell the entire polis was the greatest of any, and no other surpassed it in unexpectedness and horror" (29.4–5).

As Donald Kagan has noted, Athens' financial distress indirectly led to this enormity.[43] I mentioned at the outset the framing device by which Thucydides seats the financial digression within the account of the Thracians. But the historian also, surely not accidentally, continues to use the kind of vocabulary he employed in the financial digression, thus linking money and fiscal decisions to the destruction of life as well as bringing out the horror of the disaster that befell the town. First, the passage is framed by the verb ἐπιπίπτω (29.3, ἐπεπεσών; 29.5, ἐπέπεσεν). Indeed πίπτω– compounds appear four times in 29.3–5,[44] which, in its proximity to similar language in 27–28, deliberately echoes that passage; other verbs of attacking could have been more frequently used.[45] Second, the phrase ἰδέα πᾶσα . . . ὀλέθρου (29.5), with its distinctly (though not exclusively) medical resonance in the use of ἰδέα, especially with a genitive,[46] directly recalls and expands χρημάτων ὀλέθρῳ (27.3). Finally, the Thracians are dominated by a passion, θάρσος—the Thracian race is bloodiest when θαρσήσῃ—which makes them act out of control. These links, in addition to the fact that the Athenians' concern over their money led to the senseless slaughter, reveal that, far from treating public finance in a disinterested or arcane

[43] Kagan 1981, 293.

[44] The other two instances are ἐσπεσόντες (29.4) and ἐπιπεσόντες (29.5).

[45] Swain (1994, 306–7), in noting the use of this verb in 7.29, suggests that Thucydides uses πιπτο– compounds to bring out the uncontrollable nature of the phenomenon: "The point to grasp is that they are words used by Thucydides for a wholly unexpected visitation, one outside human control, which affects not only men's bodies but crucially their minds too." Cf. also Edmunds 1975, 192.

[46] See Taylor 1911; Gillespie 1912.

way, Thucydides is continuing not only to humanize the subject but also to connect it directly with human destruction.

As in the case of the *eikostē,* here too Thucydides presents the decision to send home the Thracians not, as he could have, as a sensible cost–cutting measure, but rather as something intimately bound up with excessive behavior and human destruction, both within the microcosmic framework of the fiscal digression and the massacre at Mykalessos, and within the larger account of the Sicilian expedition, which the historian sees as excessive from the start[47] and closely linked with the passions.

We are ready now to return to the larger issue of moral accountability. Where, in Thucydides' presentation, does responsibility lie in all of this? Is the historian, by using the metaphor of disease and his emphasis on the passions, letting the Athenians off the moral hook? The answer is yes and no. If they are afflicted by something outside of their control, then, in their role as victims, one effect is to *remove* moral responsibility or blame from them. As in the case of many diseases, however, one can try to prevent it or at least, through knowledge and understanding of the illness, exert control initially and take steps to prevent a deterioration. Interestingly Thucydides, both in the account of the plague and in that of Athens' fiscal "illness," is concerned explicitly with effects, not causes, but there are elements of his presentation that encourage the reader to draw conclusions about responsibility for actions in the first place. To what extent does Thucydides' presentation suggest that the Athenians should have been able to avoid what happened to their fiscal condition and to the Mykalessians? We need to look at the larger narrative framework of the Sicilian account as well as at the specific chapters concerned with Athens' fiscal deterioration and the massacre at Mykalessos.

Thucydides, as is well known, makes much of the Athenians' ignorance about Sicily; but an undercurrent of his narrative, especially pronounced in the first half of book 6, is that they should have known better, specifically, that they should have investigated, and, where they did investigate, do a better job. This pertains not only to his charges

[47]For example, the description of the launching of the expedition in 6.31 focuses on the ostentatious, excessive aspect of the armada, marked by words like πολυτελής (6.31.1, 6.31.3). That excessiveness is something typically seen, in Greek thought, as doomed further predisposes the reader to judge decisions and events that take place within a framework of excessive behavior as doomed.

about the Athenians' lack of knowledge about Sicily and its inhabitants (6.1.1), but also to the specious offer by the Egestans to finance the expedition, when they were encouraging Athens' intervention in Sicily (6.6.3, 6.46). So too in connection with Alkibiades. The Athenians, Thucydides maintains, were largely ignorant about what Alkibiades had in fact done in the affair of the Herms on the eve of the expedition. Thucydides argues not only that through fear that the flamboyant leader might aim at tyranny, they readily accepted accusations by his enemies without investigating the truth, but also that their ignorance in this matter was what destroyed the state (6.15.4). Not content to leave it at that, he then launches into the digression on the Peisistratids and the tyrannicides (6.54–59), one major purpose of which is to highlight Athenian ignorance and its consequences and at the same time, by means of a methodological tour de force, to show explicitly how one goes about investigating the truth, something that he shows can be successfully undertaken even in the case of events that occurred a century before.[48]

This broader context, not only of the Sicilian narrative, but also of Thucydides' presentation of the use of money for power in the *History* as a whole, prepares the reader to judge the events that unfolded in the course of the expedition, including those in 413. Although the Spartans have now set up a permanent fort in Dekeleia, the Athenians decide to remain in Sicily and enact measures aimed at overextension. Increasing revenue, and thereby one's reserves (περιουσία χρημάτων), is a desirable, acceptable goal for power, but it must be tempered with γνώμη, "sound judgment," not driven by passion. Thus Thucydides has Perikles say at the outset of war that the Athenians would prevail by combining περιουσία χρημάτων and γνώμη (2.13.2) and implies certain victory for the Athenians had they followed Perikles' advice not to expand their power while at war with the Spartans (2.65.12). When Thucydides has the Corinthians say that the Athenians are "daring beyond their power," and "risk–takers beyond their good judgment" (1.70.3), he points up the excessive nature of Athenian power and the potential problem: the need for leaders who exercise sound judgment, the ab-

[48]It is highly significant that in describing what really happened in the events surrounding the assassination of Hipparchos, Thucydides also shows—unusually—*how* he figured out the truth, quoting inscriptions, his primary sources for investigation and deduction (6.54.7, 6.59.3).

sence of which here in 413 was the loss of financial power and a decision to abolish tribute and impose a tax for the purpose of acting even more excessively. Had they had better advisors, the Athenians could have retained their strength, but they did not and instead started a snowball effect of destruction and devastation. This has implications for Thucydides' larger critique of political leadership as it relates to the management of the most crucial aspect of the war for Athens: its public finances, the underpinning of its military success.

There may be a hint that he implicates the Athenians in the massacre at Mykalessos as well for not exercising sounder judgment. Thucydides pauses from describing the horrific scene to make a gnomic statement about the Thracians:[49] "for the Thracians are the most murderous of barbarians when they are filled with θάρσος"—and having just been dismissed from what was to have been an extremely lucrative venture,[50] they certainly would have been ready to do damage. Does this imply that Dieitrephes (whom Thucydides does not explicitly condemn)[51] should have known what would happen, namely, a frenzied rampage culminating in total destruction?[52]

In Thucydides' presentation, then, there is a fundamental ambiguity of agency, both in the case of the expedition as a whole, and in 413, when the Athenians decide to continue to fight two wars and run into financial trouble. They are in one sense responsible, but once the process is under way by which they are transformed into victims of a passion and of disease, the consequences of their excessiveness cannot be averted, and, as we have seen, they can be grave. Thus the linkage be-

[49]Badian (1993, 244) thinks this is Thucydides' own opinion, but in view of Ar. *Ach.* 153–68 (a passage with extraordinary irony given what happened in 413), I am inclined to take it as gnomic. There is surely an added layer of confidence in this comment, given Thucydides' personal knowledge of the Thracians that he is fond of exhibiting (e.g., in 2.95–101); he confirms his familiarity with and thus authority to speak on the Thracians indirectly in 4.105.1.

[50]Not only would the Thracians have expected their share of plunder from the campaign in Sicily, but they were to have been paid one drachma a day, a decent rate of pay for a light-armed soldier.

[51]See the discussion in Quinn 1995.

[52]Cf., by contrast, the analysis by Grene (1950, 70–79), who focuses on the moral component of the narrative of Mykalessos and, as I have here, suggests that it could have been avoided; he places emphasis on the chance nature of the catastrophe.

tween the financial digression and the atrocity at Mykalessos demonstrates the consequences, in the most dramatic and human terms possible, of the price of Athens' financial troubles caused by overextension. As I would argue he has done earlier in his *History* from the point when he removes Perikles from the picture, Thucydides' narrative technique encourages the reader to contest or at least to feel unease about the intelligence of Athenian decision making; here questions about Athenian γνώμη form an undercurrent of these chapters kept active by the impression of irrationality.[53]

Moreover, Thucydides' presentation of Mykalessos is not only tragic but ironic. The Athenians' spending frenzy in order to fight two wars led them to stint on a relatively minor scale by sending the Thracians home. Yet this cost–cutting measure expended the lives of an entire town. Thucydides intensifies the irony by using financial metaphors. In describing the Thracians' method of madness he writes, "the Thracians burst into Mykalessos . . . and massacred the inhabitants, sparing (φειδόμενοι) neither young nor old" (29.4).[54] Then he ends the account of the massacre with the comment, "a great number of the Mykalessians were utterly expended (ἀπανηλώθη)" (30.3). These chapters also foreshadow the end: the Thracians engage in "every kind of destruction" (ἰδέα πᾶσα ὀλέθρου); while the Athenians, Thucydides writes in the famous final sentence of book 7, suffered πανωλεθρία,[55] a word that embraces the very kinds of ὄλεθρος described in 27–29. Thus for Thucydides, the linkage of money, fiscal distress, and human destruction is part of a larger argument about the costs of war.[56]

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[53]On Perikles and γνώμη in Thucydides see Edmunds 1975.

[54]Connor 1984, 158.

[55]On Thucydides' use of this word see Marinatos Kopff and Rawlings 1978.

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